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WBS

Pleiku Shells Are Traced to Korean War

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Intelligence analysts have determined that the mortar shells fired on the U.S. installation at Pleiku in South Viet-Nam had been captured by the Communists in the Korean War.

It has been learned that serial numbers found on 20 mortar rounds that failed to go off in the guerrilla attack coincide with those on ammunition lost by U.S. forces more than ten years ago.

Immediately after the Feb. 7 attack, it was thought that the 81-mm. mortars used in the ambush had been captured by the Viet Cong in South Viet-Nam.

That provoked skepticism about U.S. claims that the attack had been planned and directed by the Communist regime in North Viet-Nam. Critics contended that the ambush could have been an isolated guerrilla incident and, therefore, the United States was not justified in its retaliatory bombing raids on North Viet-Nam.

Initially, officials suggested that the equipment used in the Pleiku attack was not of U.S. make. On returning from South Viet-Nam, McGeorge Bundy, chief White House adviser of foreign affairs, repeatedly took this line in answer to reporters' questions.

Now, however, it is admitted that the mortars were of U.S. origin, but the charge of Communist infiltration is supported by the evidence that the shells used at Pleiku were captured in Korea.